# FERNGULLY: THE LAST RAINFOREST

**Original Medium:** Theatrical cartoon
**Produced by:** Kroyer Films and FAI Films
**First Appeared:** 1992
**Creator:** Diana Young

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With a subtitle like "The Last Rainforest", it isn't surprising that *Ferngully* has an ecological theme. More, that it casts civilization as an interloper in a natural paradise, always affecting its surroundings for the worse, which must be resisted by the non-civilized, preferably even non-human denizens of the world. It's similar to Uncle Scrooge in *The Land of the Pygmy Indians,* an eco-fable where Scrooge was cast as a real estate developer opposed by heroic natives, bravely defending their homeland, a pristine wilderness, against the depredations of such as him. In *Ferngully,* the defenders were non-humans, so far removed …

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… from civilization that they believed people only legendary creatures best avoided, assuming they existed at all, until civilization actually began to encroach on their idyllic society and affect their lives in ways they could scarcely imagine.

*Ferngully* was a joint project between the U.S.-based Kroyer Films (*Asterix in America*) and the Australian company FAI Films (which made no other releases of any kind), released by 20th Century Fox (which, in decades gone by, had released the old Terrytoons). It came out on April 10, 1992, and took the fashionable point of view that in any conflict between Man and Nature, Man was just naturally the bad guy. It was based on the juvenile novel of the same name, written by Diana Young (who lacks other credits), which came out simultaneous with the film.

Who was or was not the villain was made crystal clear by the film's back story, which, with all the subtlety of Mallard Fillmore carrying on about those darned Liberals, described how things were fine in Ferngully (a rainforest in Australia) until Hexxus, who liked destruction and fed on toxins, came along. But 1t was all okay now, because Hexxus was imprisoned in a tree, never to escape, the related human menaces were presumed extinct, and there weren't any poisons around to sustain him anyway. Pay no attention to those rumblings and smoke releases over on Mount Warning, where humans were rumored to be active.

But a fairy maiden named Crysta checked out those portentious signs anyway, and found human loggers at work, rendering the landscape bare. She accidentally shrank a human named Zak to fairy size, but not before the others had accomplished the most horrifying result of their activity: Felling and shredding the tree containing Hexxus himself, who found the pollution accompanying their operations both toothsome and invigorating to a poison eater like himself.

Meanwhile, a bat named Batty Koda, who had been messed up mentally by human experimentation, was warning of impending human activity in Ferngully itself. Zak confirmed that the forest was slated for "development" by the humans, who were now led by Hexxus in the guise of their logging supervisor. In the battle that followed, the human designs were thwarted and Hexxus was imprisoned again. The ending wasn't a completely happy one, however, as Zak returned to his normal size and thus didn't live happily ever after with Crysta.

Crysta was played by Samantha Mathis, and Zak by Jonathan Ward, both of whom mostly did face work, and lack other voice credits. Hexxus was Tim Curry (Nigel Thornberry, Professor Calamitous). Batty was Robin Williams (Genie, also Popeye in live action). Other voices heard include Cheech Marin (Ramone in *Cars,* Alonzo in *Oliver & Company*), Tommy Chong (Chief Running Pinto in *South Park,* Laird Boony in *Code Monkeys*) and Kathleen Freeman (also heard in *Shrek* and *Batman Beyond*).

Critical response was mixed. Many liked it well enough, but others thought it was kind of preachy, one critic calling it an "uncertain blend of sanctimonious principles and Saturday-morning cartoon esthetics."

Still, it was well enough received to have had a sequel, *Ferngully 2: The Magical Rescue,* released direct to video on March 17, 1998.

— DDM

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